

Stepping Stones Preschool

a ministry of
Rockwall Free Methodist Church

2020-2021
Parent Handbook

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Introduction

Welcome and thank you for choosing Stepping Stones Preschool as the school for your child's learning experience. We are a Christ-centered ministry of the Rockwall Free Methodist Church. It is our desire to share the adventure of God's creations based on Biblical principles in a distinctly Christian environment. We look forward to ministering to your family.

Governance

The program is a non-profit, interracial, Christ-oriented program of the Rockwall Free Methodist Church and is an integral part of the church's total educational ministry. There are five members on the Board of Directors. These include representatives from the Finance Committee and Board of Trustees. Members serve for a three-year rotation term. Three officers: chairperson, vice-chair, and secretary are elected each year. The Board is responsible for establishing the Program policies, communicating within the RFMC governing committees, and reviewing administrative and financial aspects of the program's performance. Directors are employed to administer the program in accordance with Board policy.

Curriculum

The base of our curriculum comes from Early Childhood Resource Curriculum books (math, science, phonics, etc.). Classroom activities will be planned to address the academic, emotional, spiritual, social and physical growth of the children. Each child's natural curiosity and interest will be stimulated through the use of creative learning centers.

Chapel

The preschool's chapel service encourages a time of praise and worship to our Savior. Chapel also provides an opportunity to share songs, Bible stories and scripture.

Enrollment

Personnel changes within the school precede any requests on a waiting list for the preschool. This ensures that the preschool will have the appropriate pupil-teacher ratio in each classroom. Requests for enrollment made by telephone will only be held for one (1) week without a deposit. Stepping Stones reserves the right to fill the spot after a one-week waiting period without any obligation to the telephone request for student enrollment. Stepping Stones can and will fill the spot to the next person requesting enrollment who meets all the enrollment requirements.

Registration

The program admits all students regardless of race, sex, or ethnic origin based on available space. Registration for the fall semester begins in early spring. Acceptance for admission is determined by the applicant's status as follows:

- Pupils currently enrolled,
- Sibling in a family who already has one or more students attending
- Child of a member of RFMC
- And, date of application.

Any child whose academic, emotional, or medical needs are greater than the program can meet will be denied admission.

The registration process will be completed when the enrollment forms and application fee have been submitted. Registration fees are due at the time your child's enrollment has been confirmed in written form. Registration fees are non-refundable.

Tuition

Monthly tuition is due the 1st of each month. Checks shall be made payable to Stepping Stones Preschool.

Tuition payments have been divided equally over the program year. The monthly fee is payable in total, regardless of the child's attendance record. There will be a \$10.00 late fee assessed if the monthly fees are not paid by the 10th of the month. Parents are responsible for payment until the program is notified that a child is being withdrawn. Two weeks notification of withdrawal is requested. If payment made by check is returned by the bank a second time for insufficient funds, payment from that point on and through the year will need to be made on a cash basis.

Withdrawal

The program reserves the right to dismiss a child for reasons of non-cooperation, delinquency in payment of fees, or the inability of child or parent to adjust to the Program as determined by the Director.

Personal Hygiene

Children enrolled in the program must be completely potty trained, ***with the exception of the two year old classes***, and able to communicate their toileting needs. A **change of clothing** must be kept **in the child's backpack** at all times in case of an accident. Extra clothing should be in a **ziplock bag labeled** with the child's full name. If appropriate clothing is not found in the backpack, a parent will be called to pick up child.

Discipline

Teachers must maintain a climate conducive to learning and growing. Good behavior and good manners will be emphasized always. Students shall be allowed freedom to be children, but children must also be guided and directed in their behavior.

Discipline and guidance of children will be consistent and based on an understanding of individual needs and development. Positive methods that encourage self-esteem, self-control and self-direction must be used. Teachers shall administer discipline in love and kindness.

Hours of Operation and Calendar

Classes are available Tuesday and Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Teachers are busy preparing for the day prior to 9:00; therefore, parents are asked not to bring children early. Children who have not been picked up by 2:45 will be taken to After-care, located downstairs in the gym, and will be charged a \$5.00 fee for this service.

Morning Care and After Care is available to parents needing extra time. Morning Care will open at 8:00. After Care will close at 3:30. A \$5.00 fee is charged at the time of each use.

The program operates with the Rockwall ISD calendar observing the same major holiday schedule. Our program calendar for the current year is located on page 11. In the event of bad weather, we follow RISD closings. Television and radio stations will announce any closings. If RISD announces a delayed starting time, we will remain closed throughout the day.

Telephone

Stepping Stones shares a number with our church at the present time. Simply ask for our office when calling. (972-772-7577)

Arrival, Departure and Release of Children

Parents are asked to bring students to their classrooms for the first few weeks of school. Drop off procedures will begin after two weeks of school. A staff member will escort the children to their classrooms.

Children will not be allowed to leave with anyone other than the designated persons unless written instructions are given to the Directors. Proof of identity (driver's license) will be requested from anyone unknown to the staff. If a court order denies parental custody, please furnish a copy of the document to the Directors.

Immunizations

A current immunization record along with a signed statement of good health must be received by the program before a child may participate. **Children must have all immunizations as required by state law.** Each time your child receives an immunization, an updated shot record must be turned into the director's office. **If immunization records have not been provided to the school within the first two weeks of school, child will not be permitted to attend school.**

Although we are a two day per week program, we set our policies and procedures to comply with State Standards. We keep our program up to date with State Standards to keep our teachers and your children safe.

Illness and Injury

Children that show any sign of illness should be kept at home for the protection of your child and other children. The Committee on Control of Infectious Diseases of the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends **a child should not be taken from home when any of the following conditions exist or have existed in the past 24 hours:**

1. Common cold (runny nose is not clear)
2. Fever
3. Vomiting
4. Any symptom of childhood diseases such as scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox or whooping cough
5. Sore throat
6. Croup
7. Any unexplained rash
8. Any skin irritation – rash, boils, ringworm, impetigo
9. Pink eye or other eye infection
10. Communicable diseases

If you have any questions about whether or not to bring your child to preschool, please contact your pediatrician's office... even if it means you will be a little late.

If a child becomes ill during the day, he or she will be placed in supervised isolation, and the parent(s) will be contacted. First aid for minor injuries will be administered by staff that have been trained in first aid; parents will be notified at the end of the day and asked to sign an accident report. Severe injuries will be treated by emergency medical technicians through the local authorities.

Medications

When at all possible, medications should be administered by the parent before and/or after program hours. If children must be given medication during the program's hours, state requirements will be followed. Medications will only be administered to the child with written parental permission and as stated on the label directions. Any medications brought by parents for their child(ren) must:

- ◆ Be a prescription in the original container;
- ◆ Be labeled with the child's name;
- ◆ Be labeled with the date;
- ◆ Include directions to administer;
- ◆ And, include the name of the physician.

Please bring medications by the preschool office and complete required release forms in order for them to be administered.

Student Records

Individual records will be maintained for each student including enrollment information, developmental progress checks, accident reports and other directory information. By law, both parents, whether married, separated or divorced, have access to the records of a student who is a minor. A parent whose rights have been legally terminated will be denied access to the records only if the school is given a copy of the court order terminating these rights.

Class listings are available for all parents at the beginning of the year. Parents who do not want their name, the child's name, address and phone number given out should notify the director within the first week of school.

Channels of Communication

It is only reasonable that concerns and issues will arise from time to time. Please discuss concerns with the immediate parties involved first. Issues regarding classroom procedures and other situations should first be discussed with the teacher. If resolution is not achieved within an appropriate time allowance, the director should be informed. If resolution is not achieved after consultation with the director, the matter can be brought before the Preschool Board.

Field Trips

Field trips will be scheduled periodically during the year to supplement and enrich the curriculum. They provide children with the opportunity to see their community and relate classroom learning with the world beyond. Field trips are coordinated by the teachers to correspond to the current unit of study.

Parents should complete a permission slip at the beginning of the school year as part of the enrollment process. In advance of each field trip, parents will be given specific information about the trip. If parents do not wish the child to attend a field trip, they are required to notify the Directors in advance. Children will be transported by parent volunteers. All drivers must be at least 21 years old and hold a current, valid Texas State Driver's license. Each child being transported must ride in an age and size appropriate carrier, child seat, or seat belt. (**NOTE:** Two year old classes will not take field trips but will attend in-house events.)

Birthdays

Parents may provide cupcakes, cookies or other snacks to celebrate a child's birthday. Parents are encouraged to allow a child to celebrate summer and holiday birthdays during a time when school is in session. Arrangements should be made with the child's teacher in advance.

Snack

A daily snack will be provided for your child. This will include water or juice with crackers, pretzels, or animal crackers. Special treats will be served occasionally. Please notify your child's teacher of any food allergies your child may have. You may make arrangements to provide a special snack for your child in case of food allergies.

Lunch

Each child should bring a lunch daily. The lunch box should be clearly and plainly marked on the outside with the child's full name. Please send only finger foods. Prepare food in advance such as slicing apples or peeling oranges. For hot dogs or Vienna sausages, please cut them lengthwise to minimize choking hazards. Also, refrain from sending Lunchables that require extra preparations (i.e. Pizza).

Due to the length of time that your child is in our program, State Guidelines require them to have a portion of their daily milk products while in our care. This can be cheese on a sandwich, yogurt, string cheese, or milk. We would appreciate any effort on your part in this matter.

Rest Time

Our days are very busy at **Stepping Stones Preschool**, but ample time is allowed for the children to have a quiet time or rest time. You are to provide a sleeping mat for your child. These are available at Wal-Mart and Mardel. Small blankets and small stuffed animals are allowed to make rest time pleasant. Please mark all items with your child's full name.

Dress

Dress your child(ren) in play clothes appropriate for the weather conditions. If weather permits, children will be outdoors at least a portion of each day. The gymnasium will also be utilized. Our PE and Music Classes are very active. Running, jumping, and tumbling are part of our day. Tennis shoes are preferred. Please **do not** send your child in **flip flops, clogs, or loose fitting sandals**. NOTE: Please remember that although the children are all preschool age, they are aware of panties. Please make sure your daughters wear shorts or tights.

Toys

Please do not bring toys from home. The classrooms are furnished with toys, which all the children can share without ownership concerns.

Parent Involvement

There are many ways that parents can become involved in our program:

- ❖ Room parent for the classroom
- ❖ Field trip sponsor
- ❖ Assisting teachers with special projects
- ❖ Aiding in special events for the children such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter Celebrations.

Visitation Policy

Parents are encouraged to call and check on their child if there are some concerns regarding their adjustment period. However, **we do require that parents come by the Stepping Stones office and notify one of the directors if you come to check on your child during the day.** Often the children are in transition between their classes and your child will see you. When the child realizes that you are not staying, this often causes them to become very upset, and this in turn will also upset the rest of the class.

Ways Parents Can Help

1. It is easier for your child if you will leave him/her at the door rather than go into the classroom. Feel free to call if you want to check on your child.
2. Mark your child's belongings with full name.
3. Notify the school director of any contagious disease or other illness that occurs after attending. We want to make all parents aware if a child has been exposed to chicken pox, measles, or any other illness.
4. Help your child look forward to attending his particular group. Your attitude can help him come in anticipation of happy experiences.
5. Please allow ample time so that your child will not be hurried. This courtesy to your child is important in arriving and departing.
6. Look upon the teachers as friends who want to know all about your child, and feel free to discuss anything with us that will help us to know him/her better.
7. Plan to attend any parent meetings and programs.
8. Please give change of address and/or phone numbers immediately. Also, let us know of any other changes that should be made on the child's records.
9. Keep your child's immunization form up-to-date. Let us know of any new immunizations your child receives. A signed statement from the doctor will be necessary if the information is to be recorded on your child's medical record.
10. Please respect the 9:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. time schedules. Late arrivals, early pick-ups, and late pick-ups cause disruptions to your child's class. Thank you for your cooperation.
11. Early-care and After-care are available for a minimal fee. Check in with the office for availability and fee schedule.
12. Talk to your child about his/her day at **Stepping Stones Preschool** on the way home and during the week. Let your child know how you enjoy your time and want him/her to have a happy time too!

Stepping Stones Calendar

As stated on page 5, the program operates **within** the Rockwall ISD calendar (observing the same major holiday schedule). Preschool classes begin Tuesday, September 4.

Open House..... Wednesday evening prior to Labor Day, 6:30-7:30 pm

First Day of Class..... Tuesday following Labor Day

Thanksgiving Holidays..... Same as RockwallISD

Christmas Holidays..... Same as RockwallISD

Spring Break..... Same as RockwallISD

Last Day of Preschool..... May (TBD)

NOTE: If RockwallISD changes any calendar day that affects **Stepping Stones**, we will notify you.